



**Keynote remarks  
by the Council President of the  
International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO),  
Mr. Salvatore Sciacchitano,  
to the 2021 IATA Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

*(Boston, Massachusetts, 3 October 2021)*

*[Personal salutations and appreciations]*

I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Walsh for the invitation to address the participants of the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

I would be remiss to begin my address today with data and forecasts on Covid-19's impact on international air transport. You all know very well the current traffic data and trends and, of course, the relevant financial implications.

Rather, with your indulgence, I wish to begin by sharing with you a personal anecdote which, in my opinion, illustrates the dimension of the adverse implications of COVID-19 on international air transport. My mandate as ICAO's sixth Council President began almost two years ago. Since taking Office on 1 January 2020, this is my first official mission and my first public address in person. Under normal circumstances, by now I would have visited all seven ICAO regions, and would have had the pleasure of meeting some of you in your respective home countries. Unfortunately, our new "normal" has meant that I have been more or less grounded, a reality that most of you here today can certainly relate to.

Nevertheless, the situation is evolving positively as can be seen by this IATA AGM held in person here in Boston thanks to the recent decision by this year's AGM host State to lift quarantine requirements for vaccinated international travelers. I sincerely applaud this decision.

This decision will significantly and positively impact a great deal of international tourism and trade, and ICAO continues to strongly encourage all countries to approach their air traveler entry requirements on the basis of practical and evidence-based approaches to managing risk.

As you know, the Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) established by the ICAO Council, in close coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO) and with the strong participation of the Aviation Industry, began issuing a number of Recommendations since the dawn of the pandemic. ICAO's objective was and is to support air transport restart and recovery through worldwide harmonized measures. CART recently reviewed some of the Recommendations related to passenger facilitation and certification issues surrounding COVID-19 test results and vaccine certification, and these updates will be published soon.

Health documents and their validation pose new challenges for the aviation mobility, and in a climate where neither States, airlines, nor airports can afford the additional layers of inspection required.

It's important for us to continue working together toward these recovery objectives.

As we work to attain our recovery objectives, and international traffic volumes continue their ascent back towards pre-pandemic levels, the increasingly acute civil society demands to curb and eliminate aviation carbon emissions have also grown louder and more urgent.

As revealed in the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report, the next ten years are critical for our common future.

UN Secretary General Guterres has identified the IPCC report's conclusions as a 'code red for humanity', and many world leaders at this year's UN General Assembly have reinforced this point.

For our sector the dual imperatives of recovery and emissions reduction underscore that we cannot waste the opportunity before us for sectoral transformation and renewal. In addition to the retirements of less efficient aircraft types, which has been a very welcome development over the last 18 months, commercial aviation must be determined to pursue further transformation.

In addition to CORSIA, which is well on track and getting most of the emissions-related attention in air transport these days, - and in this regard let me recall the important decision taken last year by the ICAO Council to modify the referenced base-line in order to prevent a huge alteration of the CORSIA implementation -, what is being continuously accomplished at the moment in terms of more sustainable fuels, technologies, and procedures cannot be ignored or under-valued.

Innovations in these areas deliver win-win solutions toward our complementary imperatives for sustainability and connectivity growth.

Equally incredible perhaps was the successful launch and return last month of ordinary citizens on the Space X *Inspiration 4* commercial space flight.

This mission didn't merely soar above the atmosphere for a quick moment, but orbited its civilian passengers higher than the International Space Station, and for a full 3-day period, and at a small fraction of the cost of previous and similar government-run missions.

This transformation in outer space travel is mirroring the earlier air transport evolution from State-run to privately-run commercial airlines.

Remaining on aviation carbon emission reduction, I was greatly encouraged by the further commitments from governments and industry at this year's Stocktaking event, toward a variety of net zero/2050 and other targets. Very interesting, in particular, the contribution of the Director General of IATA.

I acknowledge here as well the 14 carriers in the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) who announced their own net zero 2050 ambitions very recently, and equally encouraging has been the increase in IATA airlines joining the ICAO Sustainable Aviation Coalition, with the Qatar Airways Group signing on late last month.

I encourage those of you who have not already done so to join this movement, and to become a more active contributor in our shared pursuit of net zero powered flight.

In concluding today, I wish to re-emphasize how all aviation stakeholders must begin to re-evaluate and re-think the business of aviation in the post-pandemic context.

Today's passengers are increasingly more concerned with their carbon footprint as their cabin legroom, and if this sector and its carriers are to thrive once again we must leverage the current crisis to strengthen our resilience through improved disease and crisis preparedness, enhanced economic and environmental sustainability, and smarter operations.

At the same time it's clearly recognized that air transport companies and regulatory authorities continue to face severe financial constraints, and that governments must devote attention and investment to assure that they are stabilized and supported.

Industry too, especially given the current strain on both financial and human resources, must assure that safety and reliability compliance remains robust and ambitious so that air transport's core value offerings are duly safeguarded.

All of these topics will be reviewed at the High-level Conference on COVID-19 which ICAO is convening on the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month, and we look forward to the airline perspectives to enhance those discussions.

This event will feature three Ministerial portions which, in turn, will be supported by specific safety and facilitation technical streams. We are expecting actionable progress there with respect to aligned, convenient, and affordable solutions to validate passenger health status and get people flying again.

COVID-19 may be continuing to constrain many fundamental aspects of our mobility and connectivity today, but air transport operations are keeping societies and economies functional and supplied in very critical ways, and shielding us all from what might have been far graver and more systemic global pandemic impacts.

Solidarity and cooperation among our communities have made this global response possible on behalf of air transport, just as it made international operations possible in the first place many decades ago, and ICAO will continue to rely on IATA Member Airlines being guided by these principles as we work together to lead aviation into the very exciting future which lies in store for it.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a very productive and engaging event.